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The Philippine Islands.

SPEECH

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HON. P. J. ^{OF} McCUMBER,
OF NORTH DAKOTA,

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,

Friday, May 18, 1900.

Mr. McCUMBER. Mr. President, I ask for the reading of Senate joint resolution No. 53.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Chair lays before the Senate a joint resolution, which will be read.

The Secretary read the joint resolution (S. R. 53) defining the policy of the United States relative to the Philippine Islands, as follows:

Resolved, etc., That the Philippine Islands are territory belonging to the United States; that it is the intention of the United States to retain them as such and to establish and maintain such governmental control throughout the archipelago as the situation may demand.

Mr. McCUMBER. Mr. President, so exhaustive have been the debates and discussions upon this floor and in the press of the country pertaining to the financial and commercial benefits to be obtained by holding and governing the Philippine Islands as American territory that it seems to me to be wholly unnecessary to prolong the discussion upon that important feature of the still more important subject.

So broad has been the scope of inquiry, so varied and complex the arguments, however, that the casual reader of all these debates must necessarily have lost sight, at least to some extent, of the simple, the main question with which the country is to-day confronted.

The leading features, it seems to me, have to some extent been obscured in the great maze of presented facts and claims and statements and by obscure and somewhat technical legal propositions. I wish, therefore, to restate and, in a few words, consider this subject as I believe it presents itself to the great majority of the people of this country, in the condition it presents itself at this moment, and as a living issue of the year 1900, not as it might have been viewed on or before May 1, 1898, or even prior to the ratification of our treaty with Spain.

As a matter of justice, however, I wish to say right here that I am not prepared to coincide with many of those who believe with me in holding those advantages which the chances of war or the solemn treaty of this nation have placed in our hands to lay upon the heads of the most ardent opponents the blood of all our soldiers killed in battle, nor upon their shoulders the entire responsibility for the continuance of this war; and even if I believed it was prolonged because of their utterances, I could not but say that it had



better be continued one hundred years than that to be expedited at the expense of absolute freedom of speech—of the denial of the sacred right to express an honest opinion or conviction, springing from patriotic motives, no matter how erroneous.

But, in acknowledging the patriotic motives of those who have so ardently and strenuously opposed the course of the Administration in relation to the Philippine Islands, I do not wish to be regarded as countenancing the very few covert attacks, made from behind a painted shield, labeled "patriotism." It has been a source of great gratification and no little pride to me to know and feel that there has been in the great array of talent displayed on opposite sides, and in support of opposite views, concerning the advisability of entering upon this new course of extraterritorial expansion such high patriotic motives. In some very few instances, however, it has seemed to me that too airy has been the gauze thrown around the demon of venom to cover or hide his hideous distorted form, much less to transform him into a goddess of human liberty.

In taking up this argument, which should have for its single object the determination of what course or which of the few courses open to discussion should be pursued by our Government in relation to the territory acquired by treaty from Spain, we should proceed from some point on which all reasonable persons are agreed, or at least where no disagreement based on good, substantial reason can properly find place.

The question of what might have been said or done prior to the treaty made with Spain seems to me not to be pertinent at this time. The constitutional right to receive and hold these islands has been determined by this body in the solemn ratification of our treaty. If the action of this court is without authority under the Constitution of the United States, there is a clear remedy. The failure to invoke that remedy is an acknowledgment of the right.

There is but one principal question to be considered. What is to be done with these islands—retain and govern them or turn them over a prey to other powers or their own internal conflicts? In deciding this question we are confronted with but two others: First, is this retention for the best interests of our own country? Second, is it for the best interests of the Philippine people? And as by the very law of nature, neither wrong nor injustice can be for the real interest of any people, right and justice must be included in the word "interest."

That it is for our financial and commercial welfare not the most ardent opponent of the Administration will deny. That our commercial interest demands their retention, that our naval interest demands their retention, must be admitted. That the financial benefits to be derived in the near future are beyond calculation must also be admitted. When I realize that in two years, from 1897 to 1899, our exports to the Philippine Islands alone increased from \$69,400 in the former year to \$1,663,000 in the latter, an increase of over 240 per cent; when I note the proximity of these islands to the shore of the most densely populated region on earth, with its capability of absorbing many times over the vast surplus of manufactured and agricultural products of the world, its people now being environed on all sides with the influence of the present century, awakening to its demands in food and raiment, so that the value of our future commercial relations can with almost mathematical accuracy

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be measured not by millions but by hundreds of millions of dollars; when I realize that in our new possessions we have planted ourselves at the very gateway of this commerce, and are in position to demand of the world that the door of entrance thereto be swung wide open and all our treaty rights respected; as I look over the mighty expanse of the Orient, that inexhaustible field which for thousands of years has furnished the riches of the great commercial nations of the world; as I view the stupendous efforts that are being made by the great manufacturing and commercial nations to extend their sphere of influence and to gain control over that country and over its commerce; as I look upon the great and growing surplus in our own manufactured and agricultural products, ever demanding an increasing and widening market; as I view the enormous energies that are displayed in the great nations of the world to-day for commercial supremacy, I can not but feel that he who would throw aside this wonderful opportunity of the present time must surrender all claims to far-seeing statesmanship.

Turning now to the next question that confronts the American people: Is the retention of the islands for the benefit of the Filipino people themselves? Speaking again from a purely commercial and financial standpoint, I can conceive of no benefit that may be derived by us that will not also be shared in by them. Our interest will depend, in a direct way at least, upon the development of their great internal resources, and that development, with its concurrent commerce, can not but be of inestimable value to them, not only financially but because it carries with it a higher, a broader, and a better civilization. Both propositions—that it is for our financial and commercial benefit and that it is also equally for the like benefit of the Filipino people—must be answered in the affirmative. But admitting all of this, the opponents of American expansion challenge the righteousness of our course, and if their contention is correct, if our course or contemplated course is wrong or unjust or without the pale of strict honor and integrity, then no matter what may be the financial and commercial benefits to be derived therefrom duty would demand that we desist.

But I maintain, Mr. President, that the attitude of this Government toward the Filipino people is not only honorable and honest, but it is just and generous beyond measure; and upon this I am willing to meet the opponents of the Administration fairly and squarely. These islands are now in law and in fact territory belonging to the United States, and to a certain extent at least part and parcel of ourselves, as much so as Alaska, Porto Rico, the Hawaiian Islands, or any other of the territory acquired by us by treaty or by purchase. To be sure, we can eliminate them from our jurisdiction; we can release them from our sovereignty; but to-day they are American territory, and right here must be the starting point of our argument.

Now, it is claimed that some of these people—and I do not know how many of them—wish to be separated from the United States. This is an important question, one that affects not only the present generation—the present people of those islands—but one which will have its influence upon them in all the ages yet to come. It is an important question, one that requires not the exercise of mere sentimentality, but one that requires our practical judgment, supplemented and supported by the best impulses of our patriotism.

It is a question whether that which they seek—and how many are seeking it I am not prepared to say—would in reality be for their true interest, would be a blessing or a curse. Some one must answer that question. Who is to be the judge whether separation from us would in reality be for the best interests of the Filipino people? Who is the better qualified to pass upon the subject, the most enlightened, the most progressive, the most liberty-loving people on the face of the earth, or a band of misguided and misinformed people of a half civilization? Which is the better qualified, I say, to pass upon that subject? Let your own conscientious judgment and patriotic hearts answer that question.

In 1861 we refused to allow a highly intelligent portion of our own people to decide that question according to their view. In 1900 we are asked to allow the most ignorant of our population to determine it for themselves. Why this inconsistency? What logical reason can there be given for refusing to allow a highly intelligent people—as intelligent a people as the world possessed—to determine that our sovereignty over them was not for their interest, were we at this time to admit that a people having no knowledge of our free institutions could determine that their interest demanded separation?

Mr. President, there seems to be a contention here on the part of the most radical opponents of our foreign policy in relation to the Filipinos that these people are to-day, now, in their present condition, entitled to absolute independence and the right to work out their own destiny. And they say that we commit a wrong, a most heinous wrong, in denying them this privilege. That depends entirely upon whether that deprivation will in reality be for the best interests of these people or whether it will be an injury to them. As an enlightened, as an experienced nation, we know well what qualities are absolutely necessary for the foundation of self-government.

We know also what inherent tendencies, if unrestrained and unbridled, will necessarily lead to the subversion of the very principles of self-government, of the very life of liberty. We say that these people have not yet sufficiently advanced in the scale of civilization where they are capable of determining with any degree of accuracy the true line between liberty and license, and therefore we do not approach them, as was suggested by the senior Senator from Massachusetts [Mr. HOAR], as a young giant in the strength of his manhood, to stifle the longing after liberty in the breast of this child of freedom, but as a father, well knowing the direful conditions which will result from these unrestrained passions and desires, forcibly yet kindly seeks to guide the nobler qualities into channels of usefulness and utility while he checks each wayward step.

But we are met in this debate with the assertion—and this is an important matter—that we cannot, consistently with our theory of government and the inherent right of man, govern these people without their consent; and to sustain this contention we have held up before us that clause in the Declaration of Independence which declares that governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, and that therefore, without the consent of these people, we can not either justly or legally exercise any governmental control over them. But the construction which these persons place upon that clause

of the Declaration of Independence would destroy any government. It so happens, however, that these words have already in the life of our nation been construed, and such construction has become by precedent the law and policy of the land. We have exercised that control without the consent of the governed in one form or another over all the Territories carved out of our vast domain. We have made war upon a weaker nation and taken from her a portion of her own territory, possibly with the consent of the people of the portion taken, but certainly not with the consent of the other portion thereof; and if Senators seek to justify this narrow, literal construction with the claim or assertion that we exercised our control over the portion in dispute between Texas and Mexico with the consent of those people alone, and thereby admit the right of a minor portion to consent to estrange themselves from the major portion thereof without the consent of the latter, by the same law of logic must they also admit the right of the rebellion, for none can deny that the government of the Southern Confederacy had the full consent of the people governed thereby. That same narrow, literal construction which you ask us to adopt to-day was adopted by the people of the Southern States when they withdrew themselves from our sovereignty. We denied their interpretation, repudiated their claim, and to sustain our contention for four years we lavishly poured out the blood and treasure of the nation in support of a just, true, and intelligent interpretation.

We claimed—here was the crucial test—that the right of dissent or consent was not merely capricious or chimerical, but must be *justly, rightly, and intelligently* exercised. That is now the policy and law of the country and the construction of those words by this Government, written in the very heart's blood of the nation itself. We said to the Southern people, "Your want of consent is not rightly, is not intelligently, is not justly exercised. We know our own just and generous intentions toward you. We know that you are in error, and we alone, confident that our sovereignty over you ever will mean liberty, justice, and progress, must determine this question for ourselves and not leave it to your biased judgment." And the great majority of these same people who, without their consent, were forced to yield to our laws, forced to return to our sovereignty, forced to come back to the arms that in fact and in reality ever would shield and guard their real and their true interests, now almost without exception proclaim the righteousness of our course, the error of their own in that great conflict. With tenfold ardor will the people of the Philippine Islands applaud this exercise of our best judgment, supported by the best impulses of the great sympathetic American heart for their real interest, when they once come to fully understand and comprehend its true meaning.

Now, Mr. President, I can not agree with the opponents of the Administration that the character of the American people has so changed that we can no longer trust them to follow or maintain the grand traditions of the country. I can not agree with them that our banner stands for any different principle now than it has in all our past history; that it has a different meaning on one side of the ocean than on the other.

Though denied by the foes of the country, it meant for humanity and human liberty, when our soldiers fought beneath its folds, in the long years of the civil war. As history has justified

its claim at that time, so just as surely will history justify the present just, honorable, and noble purpose of the President of this country toward these people.

What is that purpose? To grant them, and not only to grant them but to guarantee them, liberty and protection. You say they are entitled to liberty. If by that you mean self-government, and you certainly can mean nothing more—you can not mean that they are entitled as a matter of right to anarchy—then we answer, we can give them self-government to the highest, fullest extent of their capabilities. We can give them the only true liberty, namely, the broadest exercise of individual right consistent with the equal rights of all others.

But we go further; we not only purpose to give them that liberty, but to guarantee it; and by what other method can that guaranty be maintained than by reserving to ourselves, the right—the supreme right—to shape and control.

As I have stated before, I think you must admit that these people have not yet reached that advanced state in the march of civilization where they are capable of understanding the true principles of self-government, the true reciprocal relations between the government and the governed.

We promise to guide their ship of state into the haven of human liberty. Can we, without violation of that promise, turn it over to a random crew who have not the slightest idea either of ship-craft or of the location of that harbor? If, as assumed by some, they are capable of self-government—and by that I mean a government capable of guaranteeing life, liberty, and property rights—it will not take long to find it out; and if it be demonstrated that they comprehend the true meaning of liberty and free institutions and have back of that comprehension the sturdy character of the great Germanic and Anglo-Saxon races, the foundation on which must ever rest the structure of free government, then I have confidence in my country that there will be accorded them ample opportunity in which to freely exercise the rights and privileges of an intelligent and liberty-loving people.

If, on the other hand, as we claim, they have not yet reached that degree of civilization requisite for proper self-government, that they are not yet capable of forming a government and conducting it in such manner that it will give to its people those rights of life, liberty, and property so sacredly guarded in all nations of Teutonic or Anglo-Saxon origin, but have within the germ from which all this may be evolved, then I want to say to the opponents of the Administration's policy that I know of no atmosphere more conducive to the growth of the tender flower of human liberty than that in which floats its holiest emblem, the banner of our own country. I know of no richer soil than that which has been baptized with the blood of freedom's sons. I know of no influence more potent for good, for right, for justice, for civilization than the practical administration by this great exponent of human rights, the only republic in spirit as well as in name, of its equal laws, conceived in equity and enforced with rigid justice and equality, in all the commercial and business relations of the country. Fifty years of such influence in these islands will produce more advancement, a greater civilization, than can be evolved by them in a thousand years if left a prey to other great powers and their own internal dissensions.

I have noticed, as a rule, that the pessimist always ignores every

rule of logic in arriving at his direful conclusions. And the pessimistic objectors to American expansion are no exception to the rule. In one breath they talk of how up to the present time the people of this country have always in their character represented the greatest generosity, the broadest and noblest idea of humanity, of human liberty, and the inherent rights of mankind the world has ever known; they talk of the grandeur of the character of the founders of this Republic, of the people who rose in righteous indignation against the tyranny of monarchy; they tell us how this people, the descendants of those great fathers and the children of other climes, who, breathing the pure air of political and personal freedom, and becoming imbued and permeated with its spirit, have unto this day, maintained the sturdy, national character, that characteristic spirit of benevolence, of justice, to all people.

And then they tell us of the injustice, the crime, that will be committed by our country, by these same people, against the inhabitants of this island, of the greed and love of power, of empire, that is back of our intention; that these people, now amounting to about 80,000,000, born of such parents, have by some unknown, some unaccountable freak of nature suddenly become arrested in their moral development; that the great law of heredity has for the first time in the history of creation been violated by the Creator Himself; that the old, stanch, American spirit is suddenly found to be dead, and that a servile people lost to all the virtues of their ancestors, and all of their own, which existed up to December, 1898, that the people who in April, with hearts bursting in sympathy for human suffering, waged a war and gave their blood and treasure for humanity only, in December are waging a war for conquest only, and, like demons, are hunting down people for prey alone.

And they proclaim that these people, now numbering about 80,000,000, will bow like slaves beneath the arm of a military power of 100,000 drawn from their own ranks and representing their own character, and that militarism will become the governing power of the nation. That the people whose ancestors, against fearful odds, with an almost superhuman energy, so strong were their convictions of right, threw off the yoke of monarchy of their own accord are now ready to embrace again this galling burden.

Mr. President, do not these opponents know that such a suddenly changed condition would be as impossible as that the rose should bear a thistle or the acorn a willow?

Never in the history of the world has a people worthy of liberty lost their freedom through the acts of their own government. It has been only when corruption, effeminacy, and lack of manly virtue, through long years of accumulation, had become the dominant character of a people that it became possible to trample on their rights.

It was only when they had become servile and cowardly by nature that their standing armies became their masters rather than their servants. I emphatically deny that any such condition, or even the germ of it, exists in our country.

I assert that the standard of patriotism, of honor, of integrity, and justice is just as strong to-day as ever in our history, and upon that foundation of American character I believe I can safely build my hopes for a glorious outcome of every advanced step in our national life, including our territorial expansion.





I have a right, therefore, to present these direct questions to the opponents of our Philippine policy. Have you not faith in the honor of your country? Do you believe that its sovereignty over any people on earth will be a detriment to that people? Do you not believe that a better civilization will be developed in those islands under American control than under any other possible conditions? Have you still faith in the sense of justice of the American people; and if you have, can not you trust to the future, trust your own people, your own country, to do that which is right and just and honorable by these people, as a closer acquaintance with their needs and conditions shall show proper?

If you lack this faith, if you believe that we have degenerated to such a degree that we can not be trusted—if that is your fear, then by that spirit of sincerity which should govern every argument, by the soul of honesty which should influence every reason, you should tell the American people of their sad divergence from the path of political honor and rectitude, that they may with introspective view appreciate the sudden abortion of their moral faculties. If you do not believe this, if you do not lack faith in the people, then trust them in this matter as in all others.

If the time ever comes when right, justice, interest, or humanity requires that we should release our control, I have confidence in my country to do that which is absolute justice.

Believing myself that the great majority of the American people feel that our country can be trusted in all questions of moral duty and right, I am willing to test their faith in a vote of confidence on this question in the coming campaign.

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